

# The Wild Dogs of Inwood

By ELEANOR BOOTH SIMMONS

THE reasons why Lassie, Larry Casey's beautiful Gordon setter, ran away from her comfortable boarding place at Fort Tryon Hall, on the crest of Washington Heights, and set up a dog Bolshevik republic right in Manhattan Borough, in the heart of the land of muzzles and leashes, were hidden in her silky black and tan head. But *cherchez la femme!* Whatever her motive, it was Lassie who founded the tribe of the Wild Dogs of Inwood, which for three years, making their lairs in caves among the rocks of the wooded hillsides and in the cellars of abandoned houses, caused people to feel they were living in some coyote haunted part of the West. Lassie had a consort, but up to the time he eloped with her he had showed so little character that I am sure she was the Lenin of the whole picturesque performance. And waking of cold nights in my bed, the winter after her disappearance, and listening to the weird howls that came piercingly from a cave that opened from a vacant lot on Broadway a few blocks above the 191st street subway station, I fancied I could distinguish her voice leading the chorus.

Lassie, before she became a Bolshevik, was an employee of the City of New York. She was assistant to Larry Casey, an inspector of the Park Department, and lived with him in a weather beaten stately old house on the banks of the Harlem. Accustomed to an active life with Larry, probably she found existence dull when he took her to Fort Tryon Hall and left her confined in the barns there. If C. K. G. Billings, the former owner, had been there still with his racing horses, there would have been something doing, but the place was empty except for a few automobiles, and Lassie languished.

Perhaps seeing so many dogs in muzzles and leashes gave her, in her idleness, morose thoughts about civilization. The population of the upper end of Manhattan Island is a population of dog owners, and Fort Washington avenue, where it passes the Fort Tryon Hall barns, is one of their promenades. Daily many well to do canines take their unsatisfactory exercise there in resigned pacing or frantic pulling at leashes, at the sides of their masters and mistresses. Perhaps Lassie, looking out on this, dreamed of herself as the Liberator of her kind.

Perhaps the unrest that was in the air got into her blood—it was war time then. Perhaps she decided to go back to Larry Casey. Whatever it was, Lassie wriggled out of her collar and departed. But she was never seen in her old home. A small boy of the neighborhood saw her carrying a live hen into the cave behind the great rock in the vacant lot on Broadway. Larry Casey, informed of her escapade, came over and beat about with calling and whistling, but if she heard him she paid no attention. To be queen of a pack was a heady draft, and Lassie was queen.

## Cannibalism in Cave.

The pack grew by leaps and bounds, literally. Big dogs, little dogs, blooded dogs and mongrels came to swell its numbers. There are always many lost dogs; collies, especially, have a something in their blood that frequently will send the most cherished pet adventuring far from home. Some fine litters of collie pups were born in that cave on Broadway. Few of them lived to doghood. Their mothers had reverted to type in a measure, but civilization had dulled certain instincts; they were unaware that the wild mother when she stops nursing her young carries them meat till they can forage for themselves. Unable to look out for themselves the puppies died, and it is to be feared, too, that when the lean winter came there were sad cases of cannibalism in that cave.

Winter is hard on these four footed Bolsheviks, but it is a fat life they have led during the summers. Hen roosts were robbed and two large goats, pastured on a grassy slope on Upper Bolton road, above the Hudson, were killed and eaten. When hunting failed there were always garbage cans to rifle or some one's kitchen window left unfastened with a roast, or some sort of picking inside. Nothing was too trifling for the pack to salvage. In vain did people appeal to the Police Department and

the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

A policeman took a crack at the dogs with his pistol, but the dogs were too fleet for him. The S. P. C. A. said it was against the law to shoot, poison, smoke out or otherwise maltreat the creatures. No one ever did enter that cave except one little boy, who, rushing in where the police and the S. P. C. A. failed to tread, brought out two adorable collie pups.

There is a sheer drop of the hill from Fort Tryon Hall to the Broadway cave, too steep for man to climb except at the point where steps have been built. Built it was the favorite romping place of these dogs. I have seen six of them, led by a splendid white fellow as rangy and 'big as a calf, but much more graceful, bounding back and forth along an invisible path on the precipice. Tender hearted folk thought they were trying to get down and couldn't and telephoned the S. P. C. A., whose officers went up the hill, and like the King of France, came down again.

Two years ago the tribe suddenly changed its seat of government to the wooded land that falls abruptly, like a primeval forest set on end, from Upper Bolton road to the ship canal, as Spuyten Duyvil Inlet has now become. Maybe the leaders craved more room and greater retirement. Anyhow, thither they went and in those fastnesses waxed great in numbers. Mighty were the foraging parties they sent out, according to the woman who lives in the house at the turn of Upper Bolton road—the house where Joseph Keppler, former editor of *Puck*, lived thirty years ago. Though she has several dogs of her own, numerous children and a pig, this woman has had a heart for her four footed Bolshevik neighbors. Night after night when winter came she cooked a huge kettle of scrapple and left it at the top of the hill. In the morning the kettle would be licked to a polish.

"I was sorry for the poor beasts," this woman told me, "and then I hoped giving them the scrapple would save me getting my henroosts robbed. It did sometimes, maybe. My, they did fight over that scrapple! They'd keep us awake nights with their snarling and yelping. Mornings before it was light they'd start out hunting. I'd see fifty of them coming down the road lickety-split, like this."

She pedaled her hands with great velocity, enacting the swift flight of the dogs.

"And they were terribly fierce," she continued. "One evening I sent my boy down to Dyckman street, to market, and by and by we heard an awful yell. I opened the door, and Jimmy tumbled in, and behind him I saw an enormous dog, his jaws slavering and his eyes like coals of fire. I shut the door, but for an hour he prowled around the house, till I threw him a bone from the soup pot, and he took it and ran away."

Fifty dogs coming down upper Bolton road seem a good many. Maybe the dim light of early morning confused this woman's sight. I have never seen more than six of the tribe at one time, though F. Hodgekins Silverthorne, an authentic citizen living at 196 Seaman avenue, tells me he has beheld twenty of them fighting under his window at midnight. It seems that, not content with the natural growth that came with voluntary recruits, they sent out an occasional impress gang to drag in domesticated dogs of the neighborhood. On the night Mr. Silverthorne describes a Seaman avenue collie was bold enough to decline to accompany them. He bit the chief wild dog, and the chief wild dog lifted his head and emitted a war cry.

Instantly, as it seemed, the street was filled with canines, coming from every quarter. Lean, lank, unwashed, unshaven, but drunk with liberty, they came and launched themselves upon the resident collie, who for his part put up an excellent fight. Several of his dog neighbors rushed to his assistance, and from midnight until 2 o'clock the fight raged. People watched them from windows by the light of the street lamps, but none ventured forth, and if there were policemen in hearing they prudently disregarded the racket. In the morning the collie lay dead, and several of the neighborhood dogs were nursing painful wounds.

This was in November, 1921. Lassie, the one time queen of the pack, had months before dropped out of

sight. Even in these days of feminist supremacy a woman couldn't rule that four footed revolution long. Lassie had imagination, daring, even genius, but Inwood and Washington Heights were getting so wary, locking up their henhouses and all, that the dogs needed a more desperate and savage leader. Lassie was succeeded by an enormous old yellow hound who wore a battered muzzle hanging by one strap. He had been able to remove his badge of servitude from his nose, but to get rid of it entirely was beyond him. Led by this great beast, who had a premier, also yellow, badly eaten by the



Happy, the handsome Airedale, met his death resisting the call of the impress gang.

manage but full of fight, the tribe made so much noise and attacked so many tame dogs around Seaman avenue and 218th street that the residents—the human ones—held a meeting and passed resolutions against them. To which the outlaws replied by collecting under the windmills of those who denounced them and passing viva voce resolutions of defiance.

Long after the tribe moved northward from the Fort Tryon Hall region they made frequent forays there. One that was important enough to get into the newspapers was six months before the great Seaman avenue fight. G. Axson Jones, assistant treasurer of the United States Mortgage and Trust Company, living in Hill Cottage, a quaint house perched on a ledge among the trees high above Broadway at 197th street, was waked one morning by a crash and the sound of a body hurtling past his window. Looking out he saw, he said, eight dogs lying in a circle further down the ravine, and plunging toward them from the house went the great yellow mastiff which had disturbed his rest. In his jaws the raider carried a leg of lamb which Mrs. Jones had left cooling inside the kitchen window. Mr. Jones seized his gun and trained it on the beasts, but, reflecting that Broadway stood just below, and that a bullet from his powerful weapon might miss its mark and do injury to some person down there, he decided not to shoot.

Then in the circle of dogs he saw another reason for not firing. He saw Teddy, his own Boston terrier, lost a year before. Gaunt and scarred and ragged, but his own Teddy. He put down his gun and whistled, and hearing the familiar call Teddy started up and would have returned. The leader wouldn't let him. The great yellow beast walked beside the terrier, trying at first apparently gentle dog persuasions. When Teddy refused to listen but pressed doggedly toward his master's voice they killed him very efficiently and loped away, the mastiff leading with the leg of lamb.

## Mortality List Grows.

Only a little while after that Happy, the handsome Airedale who guarded the greenhouses of A. N. Kinney, the florist on Fort Washington avenue just north of the Abbey Inn, met his death resisting the call of the canine impress gang.

For some months the dog republic fixed its capital under the rotting floor of a half demolished barn on the rambling estate that runs along 218th street at the head of Seaman avenue. Columbia University had acquired this property for a stadium, but these tailed Bolsheviks of Inwood have no more respect for an ancient institution of learning than they have for a squatter's chicken coop.

Nightly they slept in the snug cellar, snarled over the loot their raiders brought in, or sat on the

floor timbers and bayed at the moon. It took a determined little woman to get rid of them. She was caretaker on the estate, and she demanded of the Police Department that those dogs be driven away. So the Forty-second precinct sent a company of sharpshooters, picked men who had distinguished themselves in the war, and these crack shots, lying in the tall grass and creeping up on the enemy, killed some of them and drove the others away.

Not, however, wholly away. The pack is scattered but not destroyed, and there are signs that the lust for freedom still burns fiercely in certain wandering canine breasts of Inwood and Washington Heights. It isn't the pure flame that it was when Lassie, Larry Casey's Gordon setter, made her brave revolt against leashes and license tags and muzzles and all the ignominy of man's dominion. Like many another revolution it drew unto itself elements

that went near to destroy it, and the very conditions under which the dog republic existed made of each member an outlaw with his paw against every man. One can forgive this, but one can hardly forgive their paws being against their fellow dogs who refuse to become Bolsheviks.

Only last spring a dog detachment descended by night upon the houseboat colony at 207th street and the Ship Canal and murdered the harmless little spaniel that dwelt in the haunted house standing in the shade of the big tulip tree. The spaniel's master, Carl Fritchie, had leased the house, exorcised the ghost and created a home that any dog would be a fool to leave to become a hungry pariah for any amount of freedom. That apparently was the conviction the spaniel acted upon when the wild dogs came down like wolves on the fold and surrounded him. Mr. Fritchie, watching the monstrous struggle in the dim light, could not shoot for danger of hitting his pet and suddenly the marauders dashed away, leaving a mangled little body behind them. This is really a pity; it puts one out of all conceit with revolutions.

And the whole thing is making Washington Heights and Inwood feel that strenuous methods must be adopted to prevent the scattered dog soviet from welding itself together again.

# The Wave of Inefficiency

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civilization is becoming the favorite tool of destruction. It is hard to suggest a remedy against the high powered machine garrisoned by armed and desperate thugs. Before long automobile brigand squadrons will assault banks in broad daylight, fight everybody with their crew of fifty riflemen, empty the safes and dash off to security. The only possible remedy or partial remedy is for the cities peremptorily to cut down the speed of all automobiles in the business district to a limit of say twenty miles an hour. This would double the difficulties of the auto bandit, because any machine running above that speed would instantly call attention to itself and could be caught by a general alarm.

Unless all automobilists are willing to submit to such an unwelcome reduction of the power of their machines, the community must continue to pay the penalty for its good nature by the ease of robbery and murder. Furthermore, if crime increases at the present rate, sooner or later we must come to some kind of identification system for people moving from place to place—passports backed by photographs and that sort of thing—extending to all traveling automobiles and trucks. The present free circulation of motor vehicles throughout the Union is becoming a protection to the worst criminals.

On top of all that comes the airship. The moment somebody invents an airship that can rise or come down anywhere in a space a hundred feet square vertical walls have lost their protection. The criminal can spring out of the sky and carry off property and persons at will. The time is rapidly approaching when there must be a police of the air, and

a national registry of air machines. For our carnival of crime is engineered by men equal in ability to the police, equal in skill to the chemist and regularly playing a stake which the honest man cannot be expected to put up, namely his own life.

One proposed remedy for lawlessness is an absolute failure from top to bottom because it is an organization of lawlessness which calls itself "Vigilance Committee," "Citizens Protection" or "Ku Klux Klan." If the forces of constitutions, laws, public administrators and police and military forces are not enough to keep the peace and suppress the evil doer, the community is doomed. Notices to quit or be whipped, riots, lynchings are simply a way of playing the lawbreaker's game. If it comes to secret, irresponsible armed bands, the Camorra, the gang, the corrupt organization, will surely win, for it plays with marked cards.

## "Adamzad"

THE Chemosit, or Nandi bear, a mysterious animal that is said to haunt the deep forests in the more inaccessible parts of the East African highlands, has again been seen, this time by a party of reliable European and native witnesses.

It has been seen by various people several times during recent years, but no specimen has been killed or captured. The latest description of the bear tallies accurately with previous reports. The animal is between five and six feet high, walks on its hind legs something after the manner of a chimpanzee, and has a long fringe of white hair completely encircling its face.